



The Navajo Nation Office of the President and Vice President

CONTACTS:

Jared Touchin, Communications Director
(928) 274-4275

Crystalyne Curley, Sr. Public Information Officer
(928) 274-2758

nnopvp.communications@gmail.com

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Navajo Nation declares Public Health State of Emergency for COVID-19 coronavirus

WINDOW ROCK, Ariz. – On Wednesday, Navajo Nation President Jonathan Nez and Vice President Myron Lizer declared a Public Health State of Emergency for the Navajo Nation in response to the growing spread of the COVID-19 coronavirus, also known as “Diko Ntsaaígíí-Náhást’éits’áadah” in the Navajo language. There are no confirmed cases of the COVID-19 coronavirus on the Navajo Nation, however the declaration is a proactive measure to help ensure the Navajo Nation’s preparedness and the health and well-being of the Navajo people.

At the request of President Nez and Vice President Lizer, the Navajo Nation Commission on Emergency Management held a meeting on Wednesday to consider the growing concerns related to the COVID-19 coronavirus. The commission voted 4-0 in support of the declaration.

President Nez and Vice President Lizer also issued travel restrictions on Wednesday for all Executive Branch employees, which requires all divisions, departments, and programs to restrict all off-Nation work-related travel until further notice. They also directed employees who recently traveled to “hot spots,” or areas known to have confirmed cases of the virus, to self-quarantine for approximately 14 days. All Executive Branch offices are either canceling or postponing conferences, summits, and events that draw large numbers of people from off the Navajo Nation.

“For several weeks, we’ve been planning and preparing while we monitor the growing spread of the virus. We have a large population of Navajo people that reside in many states including Utah, Arizona, New Mexico, and Colorado, which now have confirmed cases, so it’s very important that we remain proactive and continue to provide outreach and information to the public. We don’t want to create a sense of panic, but we want our Navajo people to plan and prepare in the event that the virus reaches our communities,” said President Nez.

On Feb. 27, President Nez and Vice President Lizer established the Navajo Nation COVID-19 Preparedness Team to monitor, plan, prepare, and coordinate precautionary efforts to address the COVID-19 coronavirus. A Health Command Operations Center is also established within the Department of Health, which is made up of five function areas including Command, Operations, Planning, Logistics, and Finance/Administration.

President Nez and Vice President Lizer sent letters to members of Congress and the White House to ensure that Indian Health Service facilities and other hospitals receive financial support and resources from the recent \$8.3 billion appropriations by Congress and President Trump to fight the spread of the COVID-19 coronavirus. In late February, President Nez also sent a letter to Indian Health Service requesting a mandatory 45-day quarantine for IHS commissioned officers that are deployed to high-risk areas and return to the Navajo Nation. IHS notified President Nez that they are complying with President Nez's request to ensure the well-being of IHS commissioned officers before returning them to service on the Nation.

As another proactive measure, the Division of Human Resources is also tasked with finalizing an "alternative work schedule" and a "tele-work policy" for Navajo Nation employees. In addition, the Community Health Representatives program and the Health Education Program are going door-to-door to educate and inform Navajo individuals with underlying conditions, including heart, lung, kidney disease, diabetes, and conditions that suppress the immune system. They also provide information and presentations at chapters, schools, and various worksites.

"Our command center officials and health professionals are doing everything they can to inform the public and to provide as much education as possible, but it's also up to us as individuals to do our part to prevent the spread of the virus in our communities. Please continue to check on your elders to ensure their well-being and to take precautionary measures to reduce risks," said Vice President Lizer. "With many students on spring break, it's imperative that parents keep their children safe by practicing good hygiene to prevent exposure to the virus."

Symptoms of the COVID-19 coronavirus include mild to severe respiratory illness with fever, cough, and shortness of breath. It can take up to 14 days for the virus to become active after exposure. Currently, there is no vaccine available for the virus, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

The public is encouraged to take the following precautionary actions to help prevent the spread of the virus:

- Washing your hands with warm water and soap often for at least 20 seconds
- Cover coughs and sneezes
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth
- Staying home if you are sick
- Avoiding contact with people with sicknesses/symptoms
- Cleaning/sanitizing common areas and "high-touch" surfaces
- Avoiding large gatherings and crowds

The coronavirus has the potential to become severe. Severe cases can also lead to pneumonia, kidney failure, and in some cases, death. The most vulnerable are the elders, young children, and those with compromised immune systems. Health care officials also advise that if a person has shortness of breath or has difficulty breathing, to report to your local physician and/or emergency room hospital and to call ahead to allow the facility to prepare for your arrival.

“Our Navajo people are strong and resilient. In times like this, we need to remember the challenges that our elders overcame. We will continue to pray for the safety and well-being for all people as we continue to be proactive. We will persevere through this,” added President Nez.

A list of established hotlines for the public to call with questions or concerns includes:

- Navajo Nation Health Command Operations Center: (928) 871-7014
- Chinle Comprehensive Health Care Service Unit: 1 (800) 242-9271
- Gallup Indian Medical Center Service Unit: (505) 726-5888
- Tséhootsooí Medical Center: 1 (800) 232-4342
- Winslow Indian Health Care Center: (928) 289-8143
- Sage Memorial Hospital: (928) 755-4500
- Tuba City Regional Health Care: (928) 283-2501

The Navajo Nation COVID-19 Preparedness Team will hold its third radio forum on Thursday, March 12th beginning at 6:00 p.m. on KTNN 660AM and 101.5FM to provide information and receive questions. The Navajo Nation Department of Health is offering to provide presentations to communities and other groups. Please send requests by email to coronavirus.info@nndoh.org or visit their website for additional information: <http://www.ndoh.navajo-nsn.gov/COVID-19>.

The Navajo Nation COVID-19 Preparedness Team will continue to coordinate with the county, state, and federal officials to monitor the evolving impacts of the coronavirus and continue to encourage the public to take precautions.

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For the latest news from the Office of the President and Vice President, please visit <http://www.opvp.navajo-nsn.gov/> or find us on Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram.

THE NAVAJO NATION

JONATHAN NEZ | PRESIDENT MYRON LIZER | VICE PRESIDENT



CEM-20-03-11

RESOLUTION OF THE COMMISSION ON EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT

DECLARING A PUBLIC HEALTH STATE OF EMERGENCY FOR THE NAVAJO NATION DUE TO THE CONFIRMATION OF THE CORONAVIRUS DISEASE ("COVID-19") IN REGIONAL AREAS SURROUNDING THE NAVAJO NATION.

WHEREAS:

1. Pursuant to 2 N.N.C., § 881 the Navajo Nation Council established the Commission on Emergency Management, authorizing it to assess, verify, recommend and declare states of emergency with the concurrence of the President of the Navajo Nation; and
2. Pursuant to 2 N.N.C., § 883 (A) and (C) the Commission is empowered to coordinate immediate emergency and disaster relief services with Navajo Nation and non-tribal entities in conjunction with the Department of Emergency Management to recommend and deploy appropriate resources regarding natural and man-made emergencies; and
3. Pursuant to 2 N.N.C., § 884 (B), (2) the Commission on Emergency Management may seek assistance from federal, state, other tribal governments, and local and private agencies to address emergency and disaster related situations; and
4. The nature of the Coronavirus Disease ("COVID-19") is such that it has spread and increased globally, as indicated by the Centers for Disease Control & Prevention ("CDC"), the World Health Organization ("WHO"), and other public health organizations within the U.S. and regionally; and
5. In the U.S. the number of positive and presumptive positive cases have grown, with the rise in COVID-19 confirmed cases in Arizona, New Mexico, Utah, Colorado; and
6. No confirmed COVID-19 cases have been verified on the Navajo Nation and area Public Health Services are closely monitoring the situation; and
7. The Navajo Nation, in collaboration with various entities such as the U.S. Public Health Services Area Offices (Albuquerque, Navajo, Phoenix), CDC, state departments of health, Navajo Nation 638 Tribal Health Organizations and various other multi-agency groups, have organized an incident command approach to mitigate COVID-19 transmission on the Navajo Nation; and
8. In partial response to addressing the spread of COVID-19 on the Navajo Nation, a Navajo Department of Health ("NDOH") Command Operations Center has been established with an infrastructure to maintain situational awareness, conduct daily communication briefings among NDOH and key collaborative partners and, disseminate information to the public; and

9. The Navajo Department of Emergency Management (NDEM) Emergency Operation Center (EOC) shall be activated to support the Navajo Department of Health Command Center.
10. Locally, it is acknowledged and understood that the threat of transmission of COVID-19 needs to be mitigated to reduce risk of exposure to the Navajo People and the resultant consequential public health impacts.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT:

1. The Navajo Nation Commission on Emergency Management hereby declares a Public Health State of Emergency for the Navajo Nation due to the confirmation of the Coronavirus Disease ("COVID-19") in regional areas surrounding the Navajo Nation.
2. To address increased concerns of potential public health impacts due to risk and exposure to the COVID-19, especially to our older population, the Navajo Nation must encourage independent responsibility and action by the Navajo People in practicing recommended preemptive measures to minimize, prevent and reduce risk of exposure to and from the COVID-19.
3. The Navajo Nation population receives timely, consistent and correct information needed on the COVID-19 on preventive measures against contracting and spread of the virus, signs, symptoms and contacting local hospitals and clinics for reporting.
4. In declaring the Public Health State of Emergency, all Navajo Nation Branches, programs, departments will comply with and adhere to directives, instructions, and/or policies forthcoming from the Navajo Department of Health as related to addressing COVID-19.
5. The needs of the Navajo Nation are to be addressed in a manner so as to provide the necessary resources required to address said Declared Public Health State of Emergency. This includes, but not limited to, resources of personnel, medical supplies and equipment, monetary funding, and other resources as may be required to protect the health, safety and welfare of citizens of the Navajo Nation.


CERTIFICATION

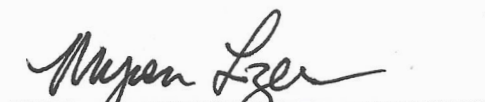
I hereby certify that the foregoing resolution was duly considered by the Navajo Nation Commission on Emergency Management at a duly called meeting at Window Rock, Navajo Nation, Arizona, at which a quorum was present and that same passed by a vote of 4 approved, 0 opposed, and 0 abstained this 11th day of March 2020.


Herman Shorty, Chairperson
Commission on Emergency Management

Motion by: Dicky Bain
Second by: Ben Bennett

CONCURRENCE:


Jonathan Nez, President
THE NAVAJO NATION


Myron Lizer, Vice President
THE NAVAJO NATION